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ABSTRACT

In 1980, 482 parents of students in 4 elementary and secondary schools in the San Diego (California) Unified School District were individually asked 67 questions in interviews designed to reveal their perceptions concerning home-school communications, the quality and types of local educational services, parental responsibility in the educational process, and parental access to the schools' educational and planning processes. This report describes the methodology of the study, the breakdown of the data by parent group characteristics, the findings of the study in 42 areas, 16 general conclusions that can be drawn from the study, and the principal investigator's 27 recommendations for responding positively to the conditions revealed in the study. A demographic description of the parent sample forms one appendix and the parent interview schedule forms a second. (PGD)

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Lowering Barriers to Home-School Communication

The Perceptions of Four Hundred Eighty-Two (482) Parents, as Expressed in Personal Interviews

by
Morrow F. Stough

San Diego Teacher Corps Project
San Diego State University
San Diego Unified School District
San Diego, California
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Table of Contents

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Educational Design and Methodology	1
Information of Help in Reading the Document	2
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	2
Section One: Contacts Between Home and School	2
Section Two: School Services and Programs	5
Curriculum and Instruction	5
Academic and Social Climate	5
Section Three: Student/Parent/Home Relationships and Responsibilities	8
Section Four: Access to the School	9
Section Five: Parents' Responses Concerning Interview Process/Results	12
CONCLUSIONS	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY	19
APPENDICES	21
A Demographic Description of the Total Sample	21
Parent Interview Schedule	23

Lowering Barriers to School-Home Communication

In Search of a Re-Definition of "Parent Involvement"

Introduction

Parents *do* form perceptions regarding the quantity and quality of educational services provided to both them and their children. These perceptions often become crystallized into attitudes and behaviors which positively or adversely affect their support of school policies, programs and very importantly – budgets.

The interview survey was developed as a major activity of a Teacher Corps project sponsored by a large urban school district and an urban university. A task group of parents, teachers and College of Education professors had determined that any realistic planning for the improvement of home-school communication should be based on data gathered personally from parents. Further, the task group sought to sample parents' perceptions regarding the following:

- the types and quality of the communication systems currently used between their child's school and the home;
- the programs and services provided by their child's school;
- parents' responsibilities in helping the school educate their child;
- parents' access to the personnel and operation of their child's school.

Educational Design and Methodology

In April 1980, a stratified sample of 600 family units was drawn from a population of approximately 3,500 students enrolled in four schools. These schools comprised a feeder system: two elementary schools, one junior high school and one senior high school. The families in the project attendance area were both economically and culturally diverse. (See Appendix A)

Stratification of the sample enabled the gathering and comparison of data by ***individual school, ethnicity, grade groupings,*** and ***poverty level*** (as defined by the child's eligibility for the subsidized lunch program).

Project staff conducted orientation and training sessions for twenty-two interviewers, mostly parents, whose backgrounds reflected the ethnic populations involved. Communication in advance with the parents who were selected for the survey prepared the way for the interviewers' visits. The length of time for the interviews ranged from a minimum of thirty minutes to a maximum of one hour. Four hundred eight two interviews were completed. (See Appendix B)

The sixty-seven items on the interview schedule were prepared by members of the task team. These items were then reviewed and modified as needed for computer analysis by employees of the San Diego State University Social Science Research Laboratory. In addition, the interview schedule was translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Lao languages.

Employees of the university Social Science Research Laboratory coded and processed the data gathered from the survey. The chi-square statistic was used to analyze data for differences among subgroups.

Project staff sent a written summary of the survey results to all participating parents.

Information of Help in Reading the Document

Although the content of the document was cross-checked with parents, university colleagues, and school district personnel who had personal knowledge of the four schools participating in the survey, the principal investigator who was chosen by the parent-school-university task group to conduct the survey and analyze results, has been primarily responsible for most of the value judgments which have been made.

Several explanations have been provided below to assist the reader in understanding the information which has been presented in the remainder of the report.

1. The data were analyzed to determine if there were significant differences among the responses of the following subgroups: ***individual schools; ethnic groups within the total sample; ethnic groups within an individual school; family units above or below poverty level*** (using eligibility for the subsidized school lunch program as the criterion); and ***"Yes" or "No" responses of parents to interview Question 25a, "Is your child learning as well as you think your child should learn at school?"***
2. Both schools 1 and 2 were elementary schools; school 3, a junior high school; and school 4, a senior high school.
3. Each parent was asked to respond to the questions listed on the interview form in relation to a ***specific child in a particular school.***
4. The sample included the following ethnic subgroups: Hispanic (169), White (187), Black (65), Asian (14), Filipino and others (4) and Indo-Chinese 43). Further, the sample represented parents of an equal number of boys and girls as well as an equal number of parents who were above and below the poverty level. The criterion for "poverty level" was eligibility for the subsidized school lunch program.
5. "Satisfied" parents were those who answered "Yes" to Question 25a, "Is your child learning as well as you think your child should learn?" "Dissatisfied" parents were those who answered "No." The percentages of satisfied parents by school were: school 1 (70%); school 2 (57%); school 3 (50%); and school 4 (57%). The percentages of satisfied parents by ethnicity were: Hispanic (69%), White (47%), Black (43%), Asian (86%) and Indo-Chinese (95%).
6. The chi-square statistic was employed to determine the level of significance of differences among subgroups. A difference among subgroups was considered "significant" only if it met or exceeded a .01 level of significance; that is, the probability of the difference having occurred ***due to chance*** was one (or less) in one hundred.
7. The survey was conducted in ***late spring*** of the 1979-80 school year. Parents' responses covered an 8-month period.

Summary of Findings

The findings were organized into five sections: (1) Contacts Between Home and School; (2) School Services and Programs; (3) Student-Parent-Home Relationships and Responsibilities; (4) Parents' Access to the School; and (5) Comments Regarding the Interview.

Section One: Contacts Between Home and School

1. **Communication from the school: Use of telephone, note-letter, home visit, or "no contact."**
   a. Ninety percent of the total sample of parents said that school personnel had contacted them personally about their child: by telephone (56%); by note-letter (56%); by both telephone and note-letter (26%); and by home visit (4%).
   b. School 1 (38%) used the telephone least often; school 4 (65%), most often.

c. Eighty one percent of lower elementary (K-2) parents said they had received at least one note or letter. Percentages reported for other levels were: upper elementary (69%); junior high (51%); and senior high (38%).

2. **Reasons for School People Contacting Parents**

a. Parents were asked to select among six reasons for contacts from the school. Their responses were summarized as follows:

(1) "Give information regarding school programs and activities" - 65%.

(2) "Report a behavior or attendance problem" - 51%.

(3) "Report a learning problem" - 47%.

(4) "Ask for help with school activities" - 46%.

(5) "Show good things about your child" - 42%.

(6) "Ask you to be a classroom volunteer or tutor" - 26%.

b. For most of the six reasons for contact from the schools there were recognizable differences between the responses of elementary and secondary-level parents.

c. For the total sample, the most frequent reasons for personal contact were: "provide information on school activities" (36%); "report behavior or attendance problems" (31%); and "report a learning problem" (18%).

d. In regard to the ***most frequent reasons*** for contact noted in "2c" above, there were few differences in responses when ethnicity and poverty level of parents were considered. However, significant differences appeared between the responses of elementary and secondary-level parents and between those of satisfied and dissatisfied parents. For example, secondary-level parents and dissatisfied parents were most likely to say that "report a behavior or attendance problem" was the most frequent reason for being contacted by the school. On the other hand, satisfied parents were just as likely as dissatisfied parents to indicate that the most frequent reason for contact by the school was "to report a learning problem."

3. **Parent-Teacher Contact**

a. Slightly more than one-half of the parents mentioned either that they had heard from their child's teacher or that they had talked or written to the teacher.

b. Significantly more parents at the elementary level mentioned parent-teacher contacts than did those at the secondary level.

c. Significantly more White and Black parents than Hispanic and Indo-Chinese parents said that they had talked or written to their child's teacher.

4. **Classroom Observation**

a. While one-third of the parents indicated that they had been invited to observe classroom teaching, one-fifth had done so. However, more than three-fourths (79%) said they would like to observe.

5. **Report Cards/Grade Notices**

a. A high percentage of parents (84%) felt that they understood the information given on report cards, although one-fourth of the Hispanic parents expressed concerns with interpretation of language or with understanding the reports generally.

6. **Teacher-Parent Conferences**

   a. Parents most preferred that conferences be held in the late afternoon (64%) or the early evening (55%). Other choices were: Saturday (41%), during the school day (36%), and before school (31%).

7. **School Bulletins/Newsletters**

   a. For 53% of the parents, school bulletins/newsletters were a major source of information about their child's school.

   b. More than three-fourths (78%) expressed satisfaction with the kinds of information they were receiving.

   c. The majority of parents who suggested improvements were most concerned about receiving more information, and more ***specific*** information about programs and activities at school and about the school itself.

8. **Pupil Progress Reports**

   a. A definite majority of parents at all grade levels preferred that school progress reports be made at least every six weeks.

9. **School Meetings**

   a. One-half of the parents said that, the last time they were invited to come to a school event or activity, they were able to come.

   b. One-fourth had attended PTA/PSTA during the year.

   c. Fifty-seven percent said that they came to a meeting or activity during the ***past two years.***

   d. The fact that parents had to work or attend school kept 35 percent of them from attendance. Also, circumstances such as lack of facility in the English language, child-care problems, illness and lack of transportation kept 26 percent away. Thirteen percent, mostly secondary-level parents felt they were not notified, not invited, or were notified too late.

   e. In their responses to eleven statements regarding the content and management of school meetings or activities three-fourths of the parents spoke positively concerning eight statements. However, at least one-third of the parents expressed negative attitudes as to whether or not provisions were made for differing language backgrounds, problems were solved when they came up, or whether meetings dealt with topics parents wanted to hear about.
   Also, satisfied and dissatisfied parents' disagreed significantly on four statements: meetings were well-organized; parents ideas were listened to; if problems came up, they were usually solved; and the principal or vice principal was available to participate.

10. **Parents' Satisfaction in Contacts with School Personnel**

   a. At least 84% of the parents who reported contacts with various categories of school personnel said that they were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with those contacts. There were significant differences between the responses of satisfied and dissatisfied parents.
   Twenty-five percent of the parents said they had no contacts with their child's teacher; 52 percent did not have contacts with the school principal.

Section Two: School Services and Programs

1. **Curriculum and Instruction**

   a. **Information on Teaching Goals and Objectives**

      (1) Although 94 percent of the parents said it was "important" or "very important" that they receive information regarding teaching goals and objectives for their child, 36 percent indicated that they had received such information.

   b. **Schools' Success in Meeting Needs of All Students**

      (1) All schools have programs designed to meet the needs of various types of students. Many parents were not familiar with those programs. Depending on their responses to a particular program, parents who expressed a lack of knowledge of the programs ranged from 22 to 67 percent. White parents were most likely to indicate a lack of knowledge.

      (2) Parents felt most positive regarding programs for "students who have ability to learn more quickly" and "students who have average ability."

      (3) Parents were least positive about programs for "students who learn more slowly" and "students with emotional, behavioral problems."

   c. **Career Education**

      (1) Sixty-four percent of the parents said that their children were learning about people's careers. However, the discrepancy between satisfied (76%) and dissatisfied parents (50%) was large.

      (2) Conversely, the percentage of parents who were "not sure," "didn't know" or who said that their child was not leaning about people's careers was as follows, by school: school 1 (72%); school 2 (58%); school 3 (39%); school 4 (34%).

   d. **Schools' Success in Preparing Students for Living and Working in Our Society**

      (1) Sixty-five percent of the parents felt that the school was successful in this regard, but 26 percent of the total population were "not sure," and 35 percent of the parents said that the school was "not successful." Further, when the schools' success was measured by satisfied (84%) and dissatisfied parents (23%) the discrepancy between the two groups was the largest that existed in the study.

   e. **Discipline**

      (1) Three-fourths of the parents agreed with the schools' rules and policy regarding discipline.

      (2) Those who disagreed (24%) wanted more/stronger discipline, more fair implementation of discipline policy, and earlier notification and more sustained contact with parents when discipline problems arose.

2. **Academic and Social Climate**

   a. **Student Satisfaction with School as a Place to Learn**

      (1) Almost three-fourths of the parents felt that their child was "satisfied" or "very satisfied." The percentage ranged from White (65%) to Indo-Chinese (100%).

      (2) Satisfied (89%) and dissatisfied parents (45%) differed very significantly.

b. **Parents' Satisfaction with Their Children's Learning.**

(1) Sixty percent of the total population who expressed an opinion (5% did not) said that their child was learning as well as they expected. This percentage ranged from 76 percent (school 1) to 52 percent (school 3).

(2) Hispanic (69%) and Indo-Chinese parents (95%) were significantly more positive about their child's learning than White (47%) and Black parents (43%).

(3) The least positive were White parents (35%) at school 3 and Black parents at school 2 (36%).

c. **Parents' Suggestions for Helping Their Child Learn (189 parents)**

(1) Spend more time working with students; more individual help; more supervision with classwork (46%).

(2) More communication between school and parents; more progress reports; contact parents before problems are serious (25%).

(3) More homework and supervise it more (23%).

(4) Better teachers, more encouragement to students (21%).

(5) More discipline (8%).

(6) Decrease class size (7%).

d. **Climate for Helping Child Make Friends Easily at School**

(1) Eighty-one percent of the parents gave positive responses, indicating the school was a good place to make friends.

e. **Counseling**

(1) A definite majority of parents (67%) felt that ***they*** should take "a great deal of responsibility" in helping their child choose classes for junior and senior high school.

(2) Two-thirds of them said that they had received sufficient counseling information. The principal disagreement came from White parents at school 3 (52%), White parents below the poverty level (42%), and parents dissatisfied with their child's progress in learning (47%).

(3) In the opinion of 39 percent of the parents, the school should establish procedures which allowed for increased parent responsibility ***before*** final decisions were made regarding their child's schedule of classes.

f. **Homework**

(1) Eight-five percent of the parents indicated that their child's teacher expected them to do school assignments at home, while 69 percent of them felt that their child "usually" understood those assignments.

(2) The percentage of parents reporting that their child "usually" understood school assignments was notably lower for: parents at school 2 (56%); parents with children in grades 3-6 (58%); Indo-Chinese parents (36%); and parents below the poverty level (56%).

(3) Most of the parents (90%) said that their child benefited from homework, although a significantly smaller percentage of dissatisfied parents (75%) agreed.

g. **Multicultural Education**

(1) That their child should learn more about other cultures at school was the opinion of 64 percent of the parents. Also, 53 percent indicated that ***they*** would like to learn more about other cultures. The least positive on both questions were White parents.

(2) Almost all of the parents (94%) felt that various cultural groups were equally welcome to participate in school meetings and activities.

(3) Eighty percent of the parents who expressed an opinion (34% did not know) said that different cultural groups communicated well together. In the case of White parents at school 3, the percentages of positive responses dropped to 54 percent.

h. **Parents' Suggestions for School Programs**

(1) Three hundred fifty-three parents (73%) gave the following suggestions as to what their child's school might be doing that it isn't doing now:

(a) Pay more attention to each child's needs; more individual attention (15%).

(b) Provide more dedicated, concerned teachers; explain things better; teach students more (15%).

(c) Assign more homework (11%).

(d) Stress basic skills (8%).

(e) Provide better home-school communication; more parent involvement (10%).

(f) Provide more discipline (7%).

(g) Provide more supervision on school grounds; more security (7%).

(h) Provide more field trips and other non-academic activities (7%).

(i) Nothing. The school is doing a fine job (9%).

Section Three: Student/Parent/Home Relationships and Responsibilities

1. **Parent-Child**

a. Parents' responses to three questions gave some measure of parent-child communication about school: 94 percent said that they talked with their child about report cards/grade reports; 83 percent indicated that they talked with their child about what happened at school as frequently as "almost every day" or "once a week." In addition, 77 percent of the parents asked their child about school assignments to be done at home as frequently as once a week.

b. White parents (94%) were much more likely to talk to their children about what happened at school than other ethnic groups.

c. At the secondary level, Black and Indo-Chinese parents reported less frequency of contact than other ethnic groups with their child both in regard to what happened at school and in regard to homework assignments.

d. Parents at the senior high school level (69%) were least likely to talk with their children – about homework assignments as frequently as once a week.

2. **Homework, Leisure Reading and Television**

a. Most of the parents (85%) mentioned that their child brought home materials to study. Satisfied (94%) and dissatisfied parents (72%) differed significantly in their responses.

b. One-half of the parents said that their child spent ***two hours per week or less*** on school assignments. Differences between responses of elementary and secondary-level parents were ***not*** highly significant; e.g., school 1 (50%) and School 4 (45%). However, differences between satisfied (36%) and dissatisfied parents (71%) were ***very*** significant.

c. One-half of the total population reported that their child spent ***three to five days per week*** on school assignments. When analyzed by ethnicity these differences appeared: Hispanic (53%); White (45%); Black (32%); Indo-Chinese (73%). In addition, there was a highly significant difference between the responses of satisfied (64%) and dissatisfied parents (29%).

d. A large percentage of parents (89%) said that there were family members in the home who could help their children with homework. Hispanic parents, particularly at the senior high school level, were least likely to report such help available.

e. Having rules for watching television when there was homework to be done was mentioned by 80 percent of the parents. The largest exception to the average was for White parents in grades 10-12 (61%).

f. Thirty-seven percent of the parents said their children "very often" chose books or paperbacks to read on their own. The figure for grades 10-12 was 30 percent.

3. **Parents' Educational Hopes and Goals for Their Children**

a. Although many parents mentioned that the final choice was up to their child, parents expressed these goals: complete high school (15%); trade school/community college (17%); four-year college (67%); leave school for a job (1%).

4. **Children's Health Needs**

a. Most parents ***did not*** feel that their child had hearing, vision, nutrition or alcohol/drugs/narcotics problems which interfered with their learning.

The most frequently mentioned health problem was vision (9%), particularly by Black (14%) and Indo-Chinese parents (21%).

5. **Pupil Absences**

a.. Forty-four percent of the parents reported their child was absent from school during the past four to five weeks. The figure varied very little from school to school.

However, there were very significant differences when the data were broken down by ethnicity: White (65%); Black (45%); Hispanic (33%); and Indo-Chinese (19%).

b. Illness was the most frequent reason (61%) given for students' absences from school. There were differences by ethnicity: Hispanic (69%); White (62%); Black (50%); and Indo-Chinese (12%).

c. Other reasons for children's absences were: medical/dental (18%) didn't want to go to school (13%); family business (13%); overslept (8%); and injury (7%).

Hispanic (16%) and Black parents (26%) were more likely to mention "didn't want to go to school." This reason was given especially by Hispanic (26%) and Black parents (38%) at school 3.

d. Sixty-two percent of the parents felt that ***two days or less*** was the number of days their children could be absent from school in a ***month*** before the absence would affect their child's progress in school. In terms of ethnicity there were significant differences: Indo-Chinese (95%); Hispanic (69%); White (52%); and Black (45%).

6. **Parents' Responsibility in Helping the School Educate Their Children**

   a. Four hundred forty-eight parents (93%) responded to this question.

   b. Seventy-five percent mentioned more parent involvement and communication with teachers and the school. Broken down by ethnicity, there were significant differences: Hispanic (58%); White (84%); Black (78%); Indo-Chinese (33%).

   c. Sixty-two percent gave responses related to instilling good habits and standards at home and making sure that their children get to school. The percentage differed among ethnic groups: Hispanic (79%); White (50%); Black (25%); Indo-Chinese (69%).

   d. Fifty-eight percent mentioned items related to maintaining contact with their children, such as listening, talking, encouraging, and reading and studying together. Again, there were differences by ethnicity: Hispanic (33%); White (60%); Black (43%); and Indo-chinese (72%).

   e. Fifty-three percent indicated that parents should supervise and help their children with school assignments. Differences among all categories were *not* significant.

   f. Eleven percent of the parents talked about responsibilities for looking after the general health of their children, including the amount of rest and sleep.

Section Four: Access to the School

1. **Knowledge of Availability of Child's Records at School**

   a. Seventy-five percent of the parents said they ***knew*** that their children's records were available to them at school. Of the number (39%) who indicated that they had ***examined*** the records, 58 percent were Black parents while 26 percent were White parents and 35 percent Hispanic.

2. **Parents' Knowledge of Sources of Help**

   a. Seventy percent of the parents reported that they know how to get help if they felt their child was not learning well enough. Satisfied parents (79%) differed significantly from dissatisfied parents (62%) in their responses.

3. **Parents' Views of the Schools' Willingness to Listen to and Consider Their Ideas Fairly in Solving Problems**

   a. Seventy-nine percent of the parents who expressed an opinion gave positive responses. Those parents who "weren't sure" or responded negatively totaled 39% of the total sample.

4. **Parents' Views of the Schools' Willingness to Share Problems**

   a. Seventy-seven percent of those parents who expressed an opinion gave positive responses. Those who "weren't sure" or responded negatively totaled 35 percent of the total sample.

      Satisfied parents expressing an opinion (89%) were significantly more positive than dissatisfied parents (58%).

5. **Parents' Problems in Dealing with School Personnel**

   a. Nineteen percent of the parents said they had problems in dealing with school personnel. This situation was most likely to be the case with White parents (27%).

      Those having problems gave most importance to improving the quantity and quality of person-to-person contacts.

6. **Parents of Newly Enrolled Students**

   a. Ten percent of the parents reported enrolling their children at least two months after school had begun in September. Hispanic parents were much more likely to be satisfied with their children's orientation to school than were White and Black parents.

7. **Reasons for Parents-in-General Not Coming to School**

While interview Question 44b surveyed only those parents who had not come to school the last time they were invited or informed about meetings/school activities, Question 48ab gave all parents an opportunity to give opinions. Parents were asked to respond to thirteen reasons for parents-in-general not coming to school. In addition, they were given an opportunity to make an unstructured response.

a. Parents said the most important reasons for parents-in-general not coming to school were:

- There were language-communication barriers (61%).
- Parents don't have time (59%).
- Parents have the attitude that the schools are doing just fine (59%).
- Parents felt they didn't know enough to participate (52%).
- Programs for parents were not related to what parents wanted to hear about (52%).
- Parents were too tired raising a family and earning a living (51%).
- Parents felt that education was the school's responsibility (45%).

b. When parents were given an opportunity for free response, 31 percent of them, particularly White and Black parents, said that parents didn't care or were not interested. (Some of the responses were given with much emphasis, including the use of expletives.)

c. There were very few significant differences among schools or between satisfied and dissatisfied parents.

d. By ethnicity: White parents were ***most likely*** to agree that parents had the attitude that they shouldn't interfere with the school; that parents felt they don't know enough to participate; that parents' coming to school was not as important as other interests at home; and that parents felt that their child's education was the school's responsibility.

Black parents were ***most likely*** to say that parents lacked time; that parents were too tired raising a family and earning a living and that transportation was a problem.

Indo-Chinese and Hispanic parents were ***most likely*** to agree that there were language-communication barriers.

Hispanic parents were ***least likely*** to agree that parents lacked time to come to school; and that parents were too tired raising a family.

8. **Reasons for Parents of Children in the Higher Grades Having Fewer Contacts with Their Child's Schools**

Parents were asked to respond to nine reasons. They also had the opportunity to give free responses.

a. Parents expressed most agreement with the following statements:

- Teachers/counselors at the junior and senior high levels had so many students to work with that they had little time to make parent contacts (62%).
- Children in the higher grades didn't bring information on school programs and activities to the home (55%).
- Teachers took less personal interest in their students (53%).

b. Parents were less in agreement that:

- Parents felt less able to help their children (45%).
- Parents felt children should be more on their own (34%).
- Children didn't want parents coming to school (32%).

c. Differences in parents' responses among schools were minimal.

d. Significantly more dissatisfied than satisfied parents agreed with these reasons: teachers took less personal interest in their students; children in the higher grades didn't bring information to the home; and children didn't want parents coming to school.

e. In relation to ethnicity, White parents differed significantly from other groups in that they were most likely to agree with these reasons: parents grew tired of school contacts; parents felt children should be more on their own; parents were made to feel they are not important; parents felt less able to help their children; and children didn't want parents coming to school.

f. Ninety-six parents (20%) added other reasons which were placed in three categories:

- Communication problems between home and school (35%).
- Parents' lack of time and sense of responsibility (31%).
- Child becoming more independent (17%).

9. **Sources of Information Which Helped Parents Form Opinions About Their Child's Schools**

a. Almost two-thirds of the parents (64%) indicated that their child was the major source of information.

b. Other sources from which parents received *much/most* of their information were the following: school bulletins/newsletters (53%); visiting or working in the school (29%); talking to persons at school (25%); listening to other children (17%); other parents (15%); newspapers/magazines (14%); relatives/friends (12%); talking/listening where people meet (12%); talk in the neighborhood (9%).

c. There were a few significant differences when the subgroups were analyzed by school and by ethnicity.

d. Satisfied parents differed significantly in their responses:

(1) Satisfied parents were more likely than dissatisfied parents to say that their child, school-bulletins/newsletters and visiting/working in the school were important sources of information.

(2) Dissatisfied parents were more likely than satisfied parents to mention other parents and talking/listening where people meet.

10. **Parents' Feelings Regarding Requests for a Change of Teacher**

a. Almost all parents who expressed an opinion (94%) indicated that they would try to have a change made if they felt their child needed a different teacher. The major exception was found in the case of Indo-Chinese parents (48%).

b. If change of teacher became an issue, 49 percent of the parents agreed that the chances of having the change made were "very good"; 20 percent felt the chances were "very little"; 10 percent were "not sure."

c. In their opinion that chances were "very good," satisfied parents (60%) differed significantly from dissatisfied parents (35%).

d. Hispanic and Indo-Chinese were significantly more positive than White and Black parents.

11. **Parents' Feelings About Contacting the Schools**

a. A heavy majority of parents (86%) said that they would feel "comfortable" or "very comfortable" in contacting their child's school.

12. **Parents' Opinions Regarding Problems of Student Absenteeism and Truancy**

a. Eighty-five percent of the parents agreed that absenteeism and truancy were serious problems. Eight percent were "not sure" or "didn't know."

b. Four hundred sixteen parents (86%) gave one or more reasons for the problem of unexcused absences and truancies. Their opinions were placed in five major categories, with several sets of responses having been placed within more than one category:

(1) Bored, uninterested or academically frustrated students (79%).

(2) Teacher/school environment-related reasons (67%), e.g., teacher-student disagreements; lack of discipline; poor, unfair, and apathetic teachers; and students knowing they can get away with it.

(3) Student irresponsibility and peer relationships (65%), e.g., students not caring; students wanting to have fun with friends; students being lazy; and peer pressure.

(4) Parents' lack of concern; inability to control their children (43%).

(5) Emotional, behavioral, personal relationship problems (34%), e.g., disagreements with teachers and other students; family problems; emotional problems; problems with drugs and alcohol.

c. With the exception of Indo-Chinese parents, all subgroups were of the opinion that category one (1) was the major reason for students' unexcused absences and truancies: "students were bored, uninterested or academically frustrated."

d. In terms of ethnicity, there were these differences among subgroups in their responses to categories (2) through (5):

- White and Indo-Chinese parents were most likely to emphasize category (4), "lack of parental control."
- Hispanic and Indo-Chinese parents were most likely to mention category (2), "student irresponsibility and peer relationships."
- Black parents were most likely to stress category (5), "personal, emotional, family relationship problems."
- Hispanic and White parents emphasized category (2), "teacher and school environment-related problems."

Section Five: Parents' Responses Concerning Interview Process/Results

1. Eighty-six percent of the parents felt the interviews were worth the time. An additional 12 percent said "probably."
2. Ninety-five percent of the parents rated the interviews as either "excellent" or "good."

Conclusions

The principal investigator was responsible for the formulation of the conclusions and recommendations which follow. They were based primarily on (1) a personal interpretation of the data provided by parents' responses, (2) a personal knowledge of the school attendance areas involved in the survey, (3) professional experience, and (4) an all-too-brief review of the all-too-meager research which was available on home-school communication. The principal investigator felt that the 482 parents who gave their time for the interviews were due an institutional response. Further, the investigator felt that there would be teachers, administrators or college professors who would be encouraged to conduct research designed to begin to clarify a very muddled area characterized by opinion, name-calling and largely descriptive information.

In summary, the data gathered from parents' responses seemed to justify the following conclusions:

1. Most parents, but not all, received personal contact from their child's school for many reasons. The means by which contacts were made changed from the elementary to the secondary level. In addition, the reason for the ***highest frequency*** of contacts differed significantly among the subgroups of the total sample.
2. Most parents were quite satisfied in their personal contacts with school personnel, although many were less pleased with their child's progress in learning and with some school programs and services.
3. Although parents formed their opinions about their child's school from many sources, their major sources of information were their child and school bulletin/newsletters.
4. Unless accommodations and adjustments were to be made by home and school, there would continue to be difficulties in getting home and school together ***at the school.***
5. For most parents, the value of any mode of home-school communications was its relevance ***to their child*** and his/her progress in school.
6. Parents' responses reinforced the need for a major strengthening of the parent-child-teacher relationship.
7. Although many parents spoke of the need for stronger discipline, their responses indicated other issues which were more important to their child's educational progress. (Perhaps more discipline within the system could have been an issue with them.)
8. Many parents lacked knowledge of the specific programs and services offered by their child's schools or they did not take full advantage of those which existed.
9. Parents were helpful in outlining their own responsibilities for the education of their child. They were expressly critical of the many parents who seemingly didn't care or shifted their responsibilities to the school.
10. Pervading the responses of a not-insignificant number of parents was an attitude of skepticism toward the schools' willingness to make, interpret, and communicate decisions regarding parents' ideas, concerns and recommendations.
11. Parents' responses to many questions varied little from school to school. In other words, there were substantive issues which were common to all of the schools; for example, sharing teaching goals and objectives with parents, frequency of progress reports to parents, homework, career education, parents' awareness of school programs and services, and many others.
12. The analysis of data derived from the responses of the two subgroups of parents who were either satisfied or dissatisfied with their child's progress in school provided notable agreements and significant disagreements in responses.
13. There was evidence that the parent sample drawn for interviews was reasonably representative of the school attendance areas included in the survey. Projection of the findings to the total population of approximately 2,500 to 3,000 family units was possible within an error of ±3 to ±5 percent. Projections for the subpopulations were more tentative.
14. Significant differences became obvious throughout the study when data were analyzed, for example, by school, grade-level grouping and ethnicity.
15. Parents were willing to give their time for a personal interview. Further, they were almost unanimous in their opinions that the time involved was well spent.
16. In a debriefing of the interviewers one sensed that parents were extremely pleased that someone took the time to talk to them about their child's school. (In fact, for several parents it was an occasion for [illegible]. Further, parents seemed to be asking for more structure in their child's education and for means by which they might be included within that structure.

Recommendations: Considerations for the Future

The principal investigator was responsible for formulating the recommendations which follow. The basis for the recommendations was outlined under the previous section, ***Conclusions.***

1. ***Parents and school personnel should critically examine and define in specific terms what they mean by parent involvement and productive home-school communication.*** Such a process should include the identification of responsibilities for all members of the home-school partnership; that is parents, students and teachers. The responsibilities should be ones to which each should and would be committed. Data contained in this study could provide leads for expanding perceptions of what parent involvement could mean.

   In the investigator's opinion, parent involvement is more than visiting a classroom, attending Open House, or coming to a PTA/PSTA meeting or school activity, although school persons and parents who were active at their child's school seemed to judge the quality of parent involvement by the frequency of parents' attendance at the school. Further, in the planning stages of the study, one sensed that administrators, teachers and parents active in the school were at "ground zero" in their frustrations with the problem of how to improve home-school communication. Their feelings were encompassed in a commonly heard statement, "But I (we) have tried everything."

   Parent involvement is more than what parents either do or fail to do. A fairer definition would include what school persons do or fail to do in first recognizing, and then doing something about strengthening, the support role of parents in the education of their children.

   Parent involvement should be defined as a two-way or reciprocal responsibility in which both school persons and parents work together in establishing and maintaining an educational support system for the child in the home; in opening the avenues and removing the barriers, already identified, to participation in classroom and school activities; and in providing parents less-restricted access to the problems and decisions which affect their child's learning at school. Further, both parents and school persons should examine means for expanding communication with the object of the whole process – ***the student.***

2. ***School personnel should collaborate with parents and students in planning and adopting a written framework of testable assumptions, policies and actions which would set reasonable standards for all members of the home-school partnership.*** During the collaborative process, the formation of assumptions/beliefs/propositions should not be taken lightly. For example, groups of collaborators who distinctly disagree as to whether most parents care about improving communication or do "give a damn" about assuming responsibilities for their child's progress would most likely produce documents which reflected their differing points of view.

   In the investigator's opinion, there has been little evidence that schools in general have sought to organize their home-school communication systems into a purposeful, coordinated thrust. A major reason for the situation may be that research data on the effectiveness of various modes of communication are lacking in both quantity and quality. With few exceptions, research activity has been limited to the preschool and lower elementary levels. Be that as it may, one continues to find research studies here and there which have seemed to indicate that there were specific points of contact at which school and home could be partners in improving student achievement. (Consult the bibliography appended to the report.)

3. ***Parents and school persons should critically examine the means commonly used to communicate with parents in writing in terms of purpose, content, frequency, single issue vs. multiple issue, coverage or overlap, and the identity of the sender; from whom would parents most like to hear?*** (Some schools have developed guidelines and standards for such types of communication.)

4. ***School persons and parents should review and evaluate for possible action, critical points of contact which have potential for improving student achievement, increasing parents' knowledge and appreciation of school programs and services, helping parents to help their child at home, and creating positive attitudes among parents regarding the amount and quality of opportunity for access to their child's school.***

Parents' feelings about access to their son's or daughter's school are conditioned by their reactions at one or more points of home-school contact. (One parent described her feelings which developed from a series of negative contacts thusly: "I guess they (school persons) think that I am just some dumb parent!") Unfortunately, a "just some dumb parent" feeling sometimes characterizes the attitudes of those who work hardest for the school.

Instances helping to create positive/negative attitudes can be as simple as the return of telephone calls or as complex as the frequency of pupil progress reports.

The survey has revealed very significant differences between the responses of satisfied and dissatisfied parents to many questions. When the data were projected from the working sample to the total population represented, the differences became even more apparent.

5. ***The home and school should examine which types of written communication could be sent best by mail to the home.*** A definite majority of parents in the survey said that their child in the higher grades did not bring materials to the home. Perhaps one contribution a home-school organization could make to better home-school relations would be to find ways to increase the schools' postage budgets.

   Also, a common criticism from persons outside the home indicated that parents wouldn't read the material. Data from parents' responses indicated that 5 percent of the parents didn't read school bulletins. (How much credence to put on the figure of 5 percent would be a personal decision.)

6. ***Since parents who were interviewed seemed to be receptive to activities which would strengthen school support systems at home, school personnel should consider the following recommendations:***

   a. ***Provide all parents, at periodic intervals and at the classroom level, with information on the teaching goals and objectives for their children. Conversely, provide the means and clarify the responsibility for parent feedback and evaluative comments.***

   b. ***Explain and publicize homework policies and requirements on an individual teacher basis. Parents would be further reassured if their child had homework more consistently, if their child understood their home assignments, and if there were follow-up and supervision measures at school.***

   c. ***Improve the quantity and/or quality of counseling information going to parents and refine procedures for allowing more time and responsibility for parents before final decisions are made in the students' selection of classes for junior and senior high school.***

   d. ***Share the schools' problems and concerns as well as the successes and achievements.***

   e. ***Measure the worth of a mode of communication not only from the schools' point of view but also that of the parent; that is, does the communication reflect the parent's primary interest – the progress of their son or daughter in school?***

   f. ***Devise means for communicating more effectively with different groups of parents: the single, working parent; the parent isolated by a language barrier; the parent lacking knowledge of how to help the child with learning problems, and the parent of the newly enrolled child.***

7. ***Parents and school persons should examine the value and feasibility of providing to parents more frequent and timely reports pertaining to their child's progress.*** A definite majority of parents who were interviewed felt that a nine-week reporting period was too long.

8. ***Schools sould examine the time schedules of both parents and school persons which regulate the possibilities of parent-teacher-counselor contacts.*** Contacts during the school day were difficult for a definite majority of parents.

9. ***Schools should reexamine the purposes, values and feasibility of the home visit.*** It was difficult to react to the data – ***20 out of 482*** parents reported home visits during the school year.

10. ***School persons, parents, and community people should examine and evaluate parents' responses to interview questions regarding career education programs, and whether their school was preparing their child to earn a living and live responsibly in our society.*** Parents' responses seemed to have implications for the following: interpreting programs which already exist improvement of existing programs; modifications in classroom teaching and curricula; and the increased use of community resources.

11. Parents' suggestions for improving the school program often centered around teachers and teaching. ***More informal face-to-face situations should be arranged regularly in which parents and teachers can discuss issues at length in small groups.*** These would be sensitive situations requiring skilled leadership. Such contacts could help to resolve problems of home-school communication and dissolve the "adversary relationship" which has been described by writers of educational literature. (Consult the bibliography appended to the report.)

12. ***It would seem that school persons and parents are obligated to examine the responses which came from the 183 parents who were dissatisfied with their child's progress in learning and from the 353 parents who shared their ideas as to what their child's school might be doing that it isn't doing now.*** If the parents' perceptions are incorrect, then parents are due information which would help them correct their misconceptions. If parents' perceptions are judged to be essentially correct, then the school faculty and their leadership have the professional responsibility to act.

13. ***Means should be found to increase the visibility of the school administrators in the home-school communication system.*** Of all the major school personnel, parents had least personal contact with principals and vice principals. Parents identify the personality of the school with that of the principal. At meetings they wait for and value the "principal's minute." In written communications to parents, principals should have more than a "corner" in a bulletin. Further, they should examine the possibility of instituting weekly, or at least bi-weekly, letters to all parents. Such letters, if open and candid, might help in bringing school and home "face-to-face" on the issues of concern to both.

14. ***All parents should be informed as to how they go about getting satisfactory solutions to the home-school problems troubling them.*** Many institutions, organizations and agencies in our society have grievance committees, ombudsmen, customer service sections and public relations divisions. But what avenues of recourse are available to a parent who has problems with the school? One parent in her interview mentioned that she was pleased to be asked to participate because "I was able to get a lot of stuff off my chest." Another active PSTA member commented: "Many kids are bored stiff with classes as I would be if I had some of their teachers. There are teachers who should be released. Our students are suffering a great deal from this. I don't blame the students."

15. Most of the parents who were interviewed expressed opinions regarding the responsibilities which parents should assume in helping the schools educate their children. ***Their ideas should be put before all parents, both verbally and in writing. How parents can or do meet their responsibilities and why meeting those responsibilities is important for their child's progress should be presented and discussed in a straightforward, insistent manner without apologies.*** Such a process will take more time and thought than is required for a one-page home bulletin.

16. There is almost nothing in the educational literature which addresses home-school communication at the secondary school. At the secondary level, there is an abrupt transition from elementary school. Suddenly teachers have 120-150 students instead of 25-35. Suddenly, parents are faced with many teachers to contact as well as a system which tends to put an array of personnel (vice principals, counselors and attendance clerks) between parent and teacher.

    This survey has documented the fact that parents do have less contact with teachers and other major school personnel at the secondary level. ***Parents should be apprised of the fact that their responsibilities for contact with the school do continue into the secondary level, and more importantly, the secondary school should devise means to insure a closer working relationship between parents and teachers and other major school personnel.***

17. District-wide policies become meaningful and effective when they are consistently interpreted at the *individual school* and ***classroom levels. There was evidence in the study that two such district-wide policies, those in regard to homework and discipline, needed such interpretation.***

18. ***School aides to whom supervisory responsibilities are delegated should be carefully informed, regularly trained, and adequately supervised regarding their responsibilities.*** For some parents, evidence of an effective discipline policy was seen in students' actions on the playground and in "free-time" activities on the school campus. Students' behavior on these occasions seemed to provide parents with one "window" to the operation of the school.

19. Parents who had difficulties with the English language expressed problems with understanding report cards and school bulletins, attending classroom observations, having their ideas shared at meetings, and even being contacted by telephone. ***It is possible that a significant segment of population are being denied communication with and access to their child's school.***

20. ***Parents and school persons should critically examine the reasons parents expressed for not coming to the school or for making less contact at the higher grade levels.*** Parents who came to school meetings were generally satisfied with such events. Their most frequent suggestions for improvement covered such areas as: notification procedures, solicitation of parents' concerns, and resolution of problems presented.

    Many parents indicated that they did not come to their child's school during the past school year. Some of their attendance problems are perhaps more immediately solvable, such as lack of child-care or transportation and language difficulties. Other reasons have more complex implications for action, such as lack of time, feelings of not being welcome, parent working, and parents' lack of concern or interest. As an example, two working parents said: "The timing of meetings is bad for working parents. Parents who work don't know how to get involved with school activities with everything scheduled during the working day"; and "schools have a negative attitude toward working parents."

21. ***The schools included in the survey could increase their credibility and possibly their effectiveness if they consistently "sampled" their own personnel, students, parents and community; shared the results; and publicized subsequent actions.*** (This activity was in evidence in at least one school.)

    Business, industry, government and other agencies would be operating blindly if they did not "sample" their consumers. Schools should be no exception.

22. The multicultural nature of the four school communities was reflected in the data gathered for the total sample. Parents in general supported their child's learning about culture and, to a slightly lesser degree, their own (the parents') learning about others. ***Parents and school personnel should plan programs tailored to parents' interests. Programs could explore some of the apparent similarities and differences in cultures which showed up in the data.*** For example, there were differences among the cultural groups in their attitudes regarding their child's progress in school, the role of the teacher, their child's degree of independence at the secondary level, their child's absences from school, homework and parents' responsibilities for helping the school educate their children.

    Leaders of the cultural programs should be persons who should be perceived to be and are in fact knowledgeable about and open to cultures ***other than their own.***

23. Most parents considered students' absenteeism and truancy a serious matter for the schools, and, in turn, 453 of them volunteered reasons for the situation. ***School persons should critically examine parents' responses in comparison with their own sources of information and personal convictions.***

    Among the parents' responses, the most commonly used, and probably most ill-defined, word was "bored." In the investigator's opinion, such catch words as well as phrases can have little meaning until parents, ***students,*** and school persons, together, search for the meaning.

    Although parents placed a definite share of the responsibility for the condition with the school, they also felt responsibility lay with the students and their parents. However, as several writers have indicated, it is a common practice to play the game of "blaming the victim" when persons look for causes of a problem. Rather, they should search for causes in the system of regulations, practices and human relationships which tend to create, continue, or exacerbate a problem.

24. ***All teaching and administrative candidates as well as practicing teachers and administrators should have a portion of their regular evaluations devoted to assessing their ability to create and maintain a home-school-community partnership for the benefit of the student.***

    Although parents were not asked questions about teacher education institutions, colleges and universities should not be ignored in the recommendations. Teacher preparation institutions have responsibilities not only for insuring their students' academic and teaching competence but also for the socialization and professionalization of their graduates. Many of the recommendations made within these pages have direct implications for strengthening the teacher education curriculum.

25. Education, as is the case with other institutions in our society, suffers from a dearth of careful research and the adoption or adaptation of available research. ***Schools, groups of teachers or individual teachers should be encouraged and assisted to conduct mini-or-action research projects which might improve the schools' climate for learning.*** The survey data suggested such topics for mini-projects as the following: more parent-teacher groups in face-to-face sessions; more frequent pupil progress reports to parents; homework designs; the formulation and implementation of a home-school communication policy; provision for daytime, late afternoon, and early evening assistance to teachers (especially at the secondary level) in contacting parents; sharing of teaching objectives with parents and obtaining evaluative comments from parents; use of parent bulletins or newsletters by individuals such as the principal; use of sampling procedures involving teachers, parents, employers and students (grades three through twelve); adaptation of curricula, career education and teaching to include the so-called "real world"; invitational-type school meetings designed around specific topics which are limited in duration and which have been identified by either school personnel or parents, or both; employment of personnel to make immediate contacts with parents concerning unexcused absences and truancies; and inviting and training parents to observe classroom teaching.

26. Previous mention was made of the fact that the survey data were broken down for several subpopulations: Parents representing individual schools; parents who were satisfied/dissatisfied with their children's progress in learning; ethnic groups (White, Hispanic, Black and Indo-Chinese); and parents above/below poverty level (criterion: eligibility for the school lunch program). Some of the more significant results were mentioned in the summary of findings.

    Further study of these subpopulations may provide more insight into the several "communities" which make up the total school population.

27. Almost 500 parents have given time to make this survey possible. Most of them, but not all, expect that something will be done with their responses. ***The success of this endeavor will be measured by the commitment of leaders not only to review and disseminate the results of the interviews but to weigh those results with a view to specific actions. Teachers and parents should share in each step of the process.***

In reviewing the pages of the study, one is struck by the overwhelming number of daily person-to-person contacts which characterize the teaching profession. It is little wonder that teaching ranks high among the stressful occupations and careers. Recommendations have been made ***not*** with the intention of suggesting more things to do but rather creating an awareness of some things which might be done differently. In the recommendations, the investigator has tried to bring into focus points of contact between parents and school persons, which should be examined by those interested in opening and broadening channels of communication. It was obvious that the contact points could produce a "good connection" or a "short circuit."

Further, the recommendations could not have been made if 482 parents had not been willing to volunteer time. And the study could not have been initiated without the support and approval of the school district and the four participating schools. All are owed a debt of gratitude and sincere appreciation.

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Appendix A

A Demographic Description of the
Total Sample of Parents Interviewed

The subpopulations of the working sample have been described below.

1. **Grade Level**	**Number Parents**	**Percent Sample**
K	22	4.6
1	25	5.2
2	27	5.6
3	25	5.2
4	33	6.9
5	31	6.5
6	25	5.2
7	54	11.3
8	52	10.8
9	54	11.3
10	48	10.0
11	54	11.3
12	30	6.3

2. **School**	**No.**	**%**
1. Elementary, K-6	79	16.5
2. Elementary, K-6	107	22.3
3. Junior High, 7-9	161	33.5
4. Senior High 10-12	133	27.7

3. **Ethnicity**	**No.**	**%**
Hispanic	169	35.1
White	187	38.8
Black	65	13.5
Asian	14	2.9
Filipino, European		0.8
Indo-Chinese	43	8.9

4. **Poverty Level**	**No.**	**%**
Above	243	50.6
Below	234	49.4

5. **Sex (of student)**	**No.**	**%**
Boys	239	49.9
Girls	240	50.1

Appendix B

Questions Comprising the Parent Interview Schedule

Parent Interview Schedule

The questions I will be asking you are concerned with such things as contacts between you and the school, homework, the part parents play in their children's education, parent participation in school activities, and your feelings about your child's school.

We hope that you will say ***what you really think.*** Please remember – your ideas and opinions will be kept ***strictly confidential:*** There are no "right" or "wrong" answers.

Some of the questions mention the words "your child." In answering those questions, please think of your child who is in the _____ grade at _____.

Q.1. First of all, during this school year, by which of the following ways have persons at school contacted you personally about your child? By phone, by note or letter, by home visit, or there was no contact?
1. Phone 2. Note or letter 3. Home visit 4. No contact

Q.2. Have you heard personally this school year from your child's teacher or teachers? Do ***not*** include report cards or grade reports.
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.3. During this school year, have you talked to or written to your child's teacher or teachers?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.4. When people at school talk to you or write to you, which of the following are reasons for the personal contact?

	Yes	No	NS/DK
a. To give you information about school programs or activities	1	2	9
b. To report a learning problem your child is having	1	2	9
c. To share some good things about your child	1	2	9
d. To ask for help with school activities	1	2	9
e. To ask you to be a classroom volunteer or tutor	1	2	9
f. To report a behavior or attendance problem	1	2	9

Q.5. Of the reasons I mentioned which is ***most often*** the reason for the personal contact?
1. a 2. b 3. c 4. d 5. e 6. f

Q.6. Have you been invited to observe (watch) classroom teaching in your child's school?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.7.a. Have you ever observed classroom teaching in your child's school?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.7.b. **If no or NS/DK,** would you be interested in observing classroom teaching in your child's school?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.8.a. Most teachers have planned specific goals or objectives for their students to reach by the end of the school year.

Have school persons informed you about the goals or objectives for your child for this school year?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.8.b. **If no or NS/DK,** how important would you say it is to know what those goals or objectives are? Very important, important, or not very important at all?
1. Very important 2. Important 3. Not very important 9. NS/DK

Q.9.a. Do you understand ***all*** of the different kinds of information written on your child's report card or grade report?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.9.b. **If no,** what, specifically, do you have the most difficulty with?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.10. Do you talk over your child's report card with your child?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.11. How often would you like to receive information from a teacher concerning your child's progress in school?

a. _____

Q.12.a. Should all teacher-parent conferences be held during the teacher's working day?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.12.b. At which of the following times would you be willing to come to your child's school for a conference with the teacher? Before school begins in the morning? During the school day? Late afternoon? Early evening? Saturday?
Probe for a "Yes" or "No" on each answer.
1. Before school in the morning 2. During the school day 3. Late afternoon 4. Early evening 5. Saturday

Q.13. Does your child's school have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Parent Student Teacher Association (PSTA)?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.14.a. Have you participated in PTA or PSTA activities for parents this school year?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.14.b. **If no,** what changes need to be made so that you would be willing to come to the meetings or activities?

a. _____

b. _____

Q.15.a. Do School Bulletins or Newsletters give you the kinds of information you want to get?
1. Yes 2. No 3. I don't read them

Q.15.b. **If no,** what other kinds of information do you want to get?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.16. How satisfied is your child with the school as a place to learn? Is your child very satisfied? Satisfied? Not satisfied? Or hasn't said very much about it?
1. Very satisfied 2. Satisfied 3. Not satisfied 4. Hasn't said much about it

Q.17. Do you feel that your child's school helps your child to make friends easily?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.18. Does your child's school have a tutoring program for students who need individual help?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.19.a. How much do you agree or disagree with the rules or policy of your child's school for handling discipline? Do you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly?
1. Agree strongly 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Disagree strongly

Q.19.b. **If disagree or disagree strongly,** what specific suggestions do you have as to how your child's school should handle discipline.
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.20. What would you like to see your child's school doing for children that you feel it is not doing now?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.21. Is your child learning about people's careers and the kind of work people do to earn a living?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.22. Many students and parents are asking for a kind of education that prepares students for living and working successfully and responsibly in our society. How successful is your child's program in meeting this request? Is it very successful? Successful? Not very successful?
1. Very successful 2. Successful 3. Not very successful 9. NS/DK

Q.23. How successful do you feel your child's school is in helping ***all*** students to learn? For example, how successful is the school with the following groups of students?

	Very Succ.	**Somewhat Succ.**	**Not Very Succ.**	**NS/DK**
a. Students who learn more slowly	1	2	3	9
b. Students learning English as a second language	1	2	3	9
c. Students with emotional/behavioral difficulties	1	2	3	9
d. Students who have ability to learn more quickly	1	2	3	9
e. Students who have hearing or vision handicaps	1	2	3	9
f. Students who have average ability	1	2	3	9
g. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	9
h. Students with physical handicaps	1	2	3	9

Q.24.a. Did you know that records of your child's progress in school are available to you for review and discussion?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.24.b. If yes, have you ever examined your child's records at school?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.25.a. Is your child learning as well as you think your child should learn at school?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.25.b. If not, what *specific* things do you feel should be done to help your child learn better?
Probe for three.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q.26.a. Is your child being taught any kinds of knowledge or behavior in school which conflicts or differs with what you are teaching him/her at home?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.26.b. If yes, would you mention some of the differences?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.27. Do you feel that your child should learn more at school about the cultures of different ethnic groups?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.28.a. Would you like to learn more about the cultures of other ethnic groups?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.28.b If yes, which particular cultures would you like to learn more about?

a. _____

b. _____

Q.29. Does your child's teacher expect students to do homework, school assignments or projects at home?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.30.a. Does your child bring home books or materials to study?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.30.b. If no, what do you feel are the reasons that the child does not bring home books or materials to study?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.31. How often does your child read books or paperbacks which the child has picked out on his or her own? Very often, sometimes, or not very often?
1. Very often 2. Sometimes 3. Not very often 9. NS/DK

Q.32. How many days during the week does your child do homework or school assignments at home?

a. _____

Q.33. Does your child seem to understand the homework or assignments he/she brings home? Does the child understand – usually, sometimes or not very often?
1. Usually 2. Sometimes 3. Not very often 9. NS/DK

Q.34. Do you think that your child benefits from the homework that is assigned?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.35. Are there family members in the home who can help your child with the homework assignments?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.36. Is there a regular place where your child can study at home?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.37. Are there rules in your home about watching television when there is homework to be done?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.38.a. Do you look for television programs which support or enrich your child's school program?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.38.b. Do you feel your child may have any of the following health related problems which could be affecting his/her learning in school?
1. Hearing 2. Vision 3. Nutrition 4. Use of drugs, alcohol, narcotics

Q.39.a. Has your child been absent from school in the past 4 or 5 weeks?
1. Yes 2. No
If no, skip to Q. 40.

Q.39.b. **If yes,** how many days was your child absent?

a. _____

Q.39.c. Were the absences due to any of the following reasons: illness? injury? child didn't want to go to school? family business? child overslept? medical/dental appointment? Other reasons?
1. Illness 2. Injury 3. Didn't want to go 4. Family business 5. Overslept 6. Medical/dental appointment 7. Other/Specify:

Q.40. How often do you talk with your child about what happened at school? Almost every day? Once a week or so? Not very often? When I think it's necessary?
1. Almost every day 2. Once a week or so 3. Not very often 4. When I think it's necessary

Q.41. How often do you ask about homework assignments or books or materials which you feel your child should be bringing home? Almost every day? Once a week or so? Not very often? When I think it's necessary?
1. Almost every day 2. Once a week or so 3. Not very often 4. When I think it's necessary

Q.42. How many days in a month do you feel that your child could be absent before the absence affects the child's progress in school?

a. _____

Q.43. What do you feel are some of the responsibilities parents should take in helping the schools to educate their children?
Probe for three.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q.44.a. The last time that people at school invited you to come to a school event or activity, were you able to come?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.44.b. **If no,** do you recall why you couldn't come?
Probe for one.

a. _____

Q.45.a. Recently, many parents living in this area said that they were interested in attending parent meetings at school. But very few people actually come to parent meetings.

Have you ever attended a meeting or activity for parents at any of your children's schools during the past *two* years?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK
If no or NS/DK, skip to Q. 46.a.

Q.45.b. People have told us many different things about parent meetings they have attended. From your experience with parent meetings, how much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	NS/DK
a. Meetings were well-organized.	1	2	3	4	9
b. Leaders knew what they were doing.	1	2	3	4	9
c. Parents' ideas and opinions were listened to.	1	2	3	4	9
d. Provisions were made for parents with differing language backgrounds.	1	2	3	4	9
e. If problems came up, they were usually solved.	1	2	3	4	9
f. Leaders used words which parents could understand.	1	2	3	4	9
g. Everybody had a fair chance to talk.	1	2	3	4	9
h. Meetings dealt with topics parents wanted to hear about.	1	2	3	4	9
i. Parents were treated as adults.	1	2	3	4	9
j. Principal/vice principal was available to participate.	1	2	3	4	9
k. Teachers were available to participate.	1	2	3	4	9

Q.45.c. What other descriptions would you add?

a. _____

Q.46.a. Do you feel that parents of each of the cultural groups represented at your child's school are equally welcome to participate in meetings and activities?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.46.b. **If no,** why do you feel they're not equally welcome?

a. _____

b. _____

Q.47.a. Do you feel that parents of the different cultural groups represented at your child's school communicate or work well together?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.47.b. **If no,** why do you feel they do not communicate or work well together?

a. _____

b. _____

Q.48.a. A large number of parents in this community area very seldom or never come to the different schools. How much do you agree or disagree that each of the following is a reason for parents not coming to school?

	Agree Strongly	**Agree**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**	**NS/DK**
a. Parents don't have the time to come.	1	2	3	4	9
b. Programs for parents are not related to what parents want to hear about.	1	2	3	4	9
c. Parents are too tired raising a family and earning a living to come.	1	2	3	4	9
d. Children are against parents' coming to school.	1	2	3	4	9
e. Parents have an attitude that the schools are doing just fine.	1	2	3	4	9
f. No transportation to school.	1	2	3	4	9
g. A language/communication barrier.	1	2	3	4	9
h. Parents don't feel really welcome.	1	2	3	4	9
i. Little effort is made to find out what parents are concerned about.	1	2	3	4	9
j. Parents have an attitude that they shouldn't interfere with the school.	1	2	3	4	9
k. Parents feel they don't know enough to be able to participate.	1	2	3	4	9
l. Coming to school is not as important as other interests at home.	1	2	3	4	9
m. Parents feel that their child's education is the ***school's*** responsibility.	1	2	3	4	9

Q.48.b. What other reasons would you add?

a. _____

Q.49. From which of the following do you get most/much, some, or little/none of the information which helps you form your ideas and opinions about your chilren's schools?

		Most/Much	Some	Little/None
a.	Your children	1	2	3
b.	Listening to other children	1	2	3
c.	Talking to persons at school	1	2	3
d.	Talk in the neighborhood	1	2	3
e.	Other parents	1	2	3
f.	Newspapers/Magazines	1	2	3
g.	School Bulletins/Newsletters	1	2	3
h.	Relatives/Friends	1	2	3
i.	Visiting or working in the school	1	2	3
j.	Talking/listening where people often meet: church, clubs, on the street, stores, at work, etc.	1	2	3

Q.50. What are your hopes, plans, or educational goals for your child? Finish high school; finish community college or a busines or trade school; finish a four-year college; or leave school as soon as your child can get a job?
1. High school 2. C.C./Bus./Trade school 3. Four-year college 4. Leave for job 9. NS/DK

Q.51. How much responsibility do you feel parents should take in helping their children select their classes in junior and senior high school?
1. A great deal 2. Some 3. None at all

Q.52. **Ask only if child is in grade six or above.** Do you feel that you have received from the school all of the information necessary to help you and your child decide which classes he/she should take in junior or senior high school?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.53. **Ask only if child is in grade six or above.** How do you feel about the amount of responsibility the school allows for or gives you in helping your child select classes for junior or senior high school? Should the amount of responsibility be increased, lessened, or is it about right?
1. Should be increased 2. Amount is about right 3. Amount should be lessened

Q.54.a. Some people have told us that, as students move on beyond second or third grade, parents seem to have fewer contacts with their school. For each of the following possible reasons, tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly.

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly	NS/DK
a. The school subjects are too difficult to understand.	1	2	3	4	9
b. Parents get tired of school contacts.	1	2	3	4	9
c. Parents feel children should be more on their own.	1	2	3	4	9
d. Parents are made to feel they are not important.	1	2	3	4	9
e. Teachers take less personal interest in their students.	1	2	3	4	9
f. Parents feel less able to help their children.	1	2	3	4	9
g. Children don't want parents coming to the school.	1	2	3	4	9
h. Children in the higher grades don't bring information on school programs and activities to the home.	1	2	3	4	9
i. Teachers and counselors at the junior and senior high have so many students to work with that they have little time to make parent contacts.	1	2	3	4	9

Q.54.b. What other reasons would you add?

a. _____

Q.55.a. Have you had problems dealing with school personnel?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.55.b. **If yes,** what specifically do you feel could ***be done to make*** contacts with school personnel more satisfying for you?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.56.a. Did you enroll your child as a new student at least two months or more after the regular school year had begun?
1. Yes 2. No
If no, skip to Q. 57.

Q.56.b. **If yes,** what specific things did persons at the school do to help you or your child feel good about your new school?
Probe for two.

a. _____

b. _____

Q.56.c. Is there anything which should have been done which wasn't done to help you or your child feel good about your new school?

a. _____

b. _____

Q.57. If you felt that your child was not learning well enough in school, would you know how to get help for your child?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.58. If your school asked for your ideas in solving some of the problems it faces, do you feel that your ideas would be respected and considered fairly?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.59. Do you feel that your child's school is interested in sharing its problems with you?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.60.a. Some people in the community area have told us that they are very much concerned that too many students are absent from school without an acceptable reason or they "skip" classes without permission. Do you feel that absenteeism and truancy are serious problems, somewhat serious problems, or not-at-all serious problems?
1. Serious problems 2. Somewhat serious problems 3. Not-at-all serious problems 9. NS/DK

Q.60.b. Why do you think so many students are absent without an acceptable reason or "skip" classes without permission?
Probe for three.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Q.61.a. If you felt that your child needed a different teacher at shool, would you try to have the change made?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

Q.61.b. **If yes,** what do you think the chances would be of having the change made? Very good chance, average chance, very little chance?
1. Very good 2. Average 3. Very little 9. NS/DK

Q.62. How comfortable would you feel in contacting the school about your child? Very comfortable, comfortable, not very comfortable, or would not contact the school?
1. Very comfortable 2. Comfortable 3. Not very comfortable 4. Wouldn't contact school

Q.63. If you have had contacts with the following persons working at your child's school, how satisfied were you with those contacts? Very satisfied, satisfied, not satisfied, or had no contact?

	Very Satisf'd	Satisf'd	Not Satisf'd	No Contact
1. Child's teacher	1	2	3	9
2. Principal	1	2	3	9
3. Vice principal	1	2	3	9
4. Secretary/Office Staff	1	2	3	9
5. School Nurse	1	2	3	9
6. School Counselor	1	2	3	9
7. Custodians	1	2	3	9
8. Other Parents	1	2	3	9
9. Community Aide	1	2	3	9
10. Instructional Aide	1	2	3	9

Q.64. Do you think this interview has been worth the time you have given to it?
1. Yes 2. Probably 3. No 9. NS/DK

Q.65. In terms of its ***value*** or ***helpfulness*** to you, how would you rate the interview? Was it excellent, good, fair, or poor?
1. Excellent 2. Good 3. Fair 4. Poor

Q.66. Would you like us to share with you the results of all the parent interviews?
1. Yes 2. No

Q.67. Would you be willing to work with other parents and school persons in studying the results of the interviews and in planning programs to improve home-school communication?
1. Yes 2. No 9. NS/DK

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